

communities, and bringing effective and rights-respecting state presence into conflict zones. Peace accord consolidation is especially weak in terms of implementing the Ethnic Chapter and gender provisions; protection of human rights defenders, social leaders, and communities; dismantling paramilitary networks; protection of ex-combatants; provision of adequate programs for farmers committed to coca eradication, and implementation of the comprehensive rural reform, including provision of land to displaced persons, poor farmers, and indigenous and Afro-Colombian people. While U.S. aid to advance peace accord implementation is important and well-targeted, the failure to advance peace accord implementation is not primarily a question of resources, but of political will.

As you dialogue with the Colombian government, we ask you to publicly as well as privately:

Insist, as a condition of any future U.S. security assistance, that the Colombian government implement serious police reform, including transferring the police from the Defense Ministry to a civilian agency, ensuring all human rights abuses by police are tried in civilian courts, dismantling the ESMAD, revising use-of-force-protocols, and establishing external oversight and controls over the police. Limiting reforms to increasing human rights courses and revising internal disciplinary procedures is not an adequate response. The U.S. government should also encourage progress on prosecuting cases in civilian courts against security force members involved in abuses in the context of the protests, raise concerns regarding specious or excessive prosecutions of protesters, and urge the Colombian government to respect the right to protest.

Urge the Colombian government to recommend to fully implementing the peace accords. It is essential to maintain U.S. diplomatic and financial support for implementing the accords as the central framework for U.S. policy towards Colombia. Please also express publicly support for the work of the tripartite transitional justice system, namely the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), the Truth Commission, and the Search Unit for the Disappeared.

Express publicly your concerns about the grave dangers faced by Colombian human rights defenders and social leaders and emphasize the importance of their role in building peace and defending the rule of law. U.S.-Colombia actions to address climate change should also include protection of the rights and lives of endangered environmental activists, who are on the frontlines of efforts to protect the planet.

Urge the Colombian government to promptly and regularly convene the National Commission on Security Guarantees established by the peace accords, which should include participation by civil society, government, and ex-combatants, to develop and implement a plan for dismantling paramilitary and other illegal armed networks and for providing security to human rights defenders, communities, and ex-combatants. This long-delayed commitment, central to bring rights-respecting security to conflict zones and protecting human rights defenders, must advance.

Urge the Colombian government to uphold the rights of Afro-Colombian, indigenous, and Palenquero people. Ask the Colombian government to prioritize implementing the peace agreement's Ethnic Chapter. The government should convene the Special High-Level Mechanism with Ethnic Peoples (IANPE), mandated by the peace accords, to discuss the best methods to implement the Ethnic Chapter and should work with Afro-Colombian and indigenous authorities and

civil rights groups to guarantee its consolidation at the local and regional level. In addition, urge the Colombian government to implement the humanitarian accords with communities that serve to protect such communities, ensure assistance and protection to internally displaced persons, and address racial discrimination including the Humanitarian Accord Now in Chocó. We would greatly welcome the revitalization of the U.S.-Colombian Racial Action Plan (CAPREE) and the development of a joint U.S.-Colombian strategy with specific steps to address structural racism.

Urge the Colombian government to prioritize full and effective implementation of provisions to achieve "a genuine structural transformation of the countryside" as agreed under the Comprehensive Rural Reform chapter of the peace accords. This is critical to address the exclusion and inequality in rural areas, particularly in access to land, which is a root cause as well as a consequence of conflict in Colombia. Only limited progress has been made in implementing provisions to improve access to land, due in part to administrative delays and inadequate allocation of resources, and to a focus on formalizing tenure rather than redistributing land. Peace is unlikely to be sustainable as long as many poor, landless, marginalized, and displaced rural families see no improvement in their lives and livelihoods, which depend on access to land.

Urge the Colombian government to address the failure to uphold its commitments outlined in the Labor Action Plan (LAP) and ensure that labor rights are fully applied and protected in Colombia. As detailed in the U.S. Department of Labor's recently released Second Periodic Review of Progress of the Colombia Labor Rights Complaint Submission dated October 7, 2021, a number of issues and benchmarks of the 2017 Submission Report recommendations have not been satisfactorily addressed and improved upon by the Colombian government. As the lack of labor rights enforcement and protection are an underlying factor in economic inequality and civic unrest, advancement on labor rights issues is critical and should be strongly emphasized by the U.S. government with Colombia.

Insist on progress on reforms of Colombian military and intelligence services, including to end persistent patterns of surveillance over human rights defenders and other civil society leaders, journalists, and judicial personnel. While members of the military who committed gross human rights violations can receive transitional justice benefits by collaborating with the JEP and providing the truth about their crimes, the Colombian government must still be urged to provide accountability for the more than 6,000 extrajudicial executions by members of the Colombian armed forces, largely of poor young men executed and dressed up in guerrilla uniforms to be claimed as enemy dead.

The United States should also uphold the peace accords directly through its own policy choices. First, the United States should support counternarcotics policy that abides by the peace accords' drug policy chapter. Such support must focus on working with small farmer communities to eradicate and replace coca, providing sufficient support for such farmers and communities to thrive, and must refrain from employing harsh and ineffective tactics such as aerial spraying. Restarting spraying will be seen as undermining the accords and will drive away farmers from cooperating. The peace accords emphasize dismantling drug trafficking and money laundering networks, which are U.S. priorities. Second, the United States should remove the Comunes Party from the terrorist list. It is counterproductive to main-

tain on this list ex-combatants who have shown their commitment to peace for the last five years. It demonstrates an ambivalence towards accords the United States helped to forge and hampers the ability of the United States and partners to provide support for reintegration and even for broader community development programs in areas with ex-combatants' presence.

It is in the interests of both Colombia and the United States that peace be consolidated, police and military become more rights respecting, discrimination and violence against Afro-Colombian and indigenous peoples end, and human rights defenders be able to operate without fear for their lives. Only by challenging the Colombian government to address these serious underlying problems in Colombia can the United States contribute to this more hopeful future.

Sincerely,

Amazon Watch; American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO); Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America; Colombia Human Rights Committee; Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces; Global Exchange; Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ; Healing Bridges.

Institute for Policy Studies, Drug Policy Project; International Institute on Race, Equality and Human Rights; Latin America Working Group; Missionary Oblates; National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd; Oxfam; United Church of Christ, Justice and Local Church Ministries; Washington Office on Latin America; Witness for Peace Solidarity Collective.

THE MITFORD MUSEUM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, in 1994, Jan Karon, an author from North Carolina, released a novel titled "At Home in Mitford." That novel was the first of 14 she wrote in a series that depicted a small town located in western North Carolina.

To be clear, the town of Mitford is purely fictional, but, in fact, it was based off a town in North Carolina's Fifth District where Jan Karon grew up and drew inspiration from, the town of Hudson.

In early October, it was my privilege and honor, along with hundreds of people from 31 different States, to be in Hudson for the dedication ceremony of the new Mitford Museum.

The mission of this museum is to share the small-town values, through artifacts and archives, that relate to western North Carolina and Jan Karon's novels with those who visit.

One of the museum's objectives is to also to enrich both reading and writing appreciation and enhancing the literary skills in youth and adults. Those important endeavors are worthy of praise.

Jan Karon, along with many of us, grew up learning and appreciating the small-town values which have helped make our country great. By sharing them with her readers, she helps preserve the continuity of those values so

that generations both present and future will carry them forward.

We all long for America to return to those simple values and not stray off course. Think about what some of those values are. They are comradery, service, sense of community, putting in a hard day's work, and family.

If you were to take the time and travel across North Carolina's Fifth District, you would find salt-of-the-earth people who live and breathe those values. Those values are alive and well in every small business, supermarket, church, community, and neighborhood in the Fifth District and across the entire country.

You see, small-town values are not a euphemism for exclusivity or division. They are values that transcend boundaries such as socioeconomic status, political affiliation, and geography.

Mr. Speaker, I consider myself blessed to have been raised in a small town and to have learned those values at a young age. Throughout my life, I have carried them with me.

It is even more of a blessing that I have been entrusted to serve small towns like Hudson and so many others that are the lifeblood of western North Carolina.

I encourage everyone to visit the town of Hudson and see exactly what I mean. Take some time to learn about the values that small towns across this country are built on and how, over time, they have made such an impact upon everyday people.

The undeniable truth is that small-town values will forever be America's values.

SEPTEMBER JOBS REPORT

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, as a former educator, it is clear to me that the Biden administration needs some serious math tutoring. The September jobs report resembles an incomplete assignment that a student turned in at the very last minute.

Out of 500,000 projected jobs, only 194,000 were added. Five million jobs are still unrecovered in America, and labor participation has slumped to 61.6 percent. It is the worst jobs report of the year, and there are roughly 3 months left to go.

That report rightfully deserves an F, and it tacks on another chapter of this administration making promises it cannot meet. Yet again, the so-called Build Back Better agenda falls flat on its face and the numbers do not lie.

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CHILD CARE CRISIS IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to spend a few minutes to talk about an October 15 visit to Connecticut by President Biden where he actually put the eyes of the country for a couple of hours on a critical issue

that his Build Back Better agenda is focused on fixing, which is, namely, the crisis in child daycare all across the country.

On Friday, my colleagues and I, as well as President Biden, visited the Capitol Child Development Center, where the executive director, Barbara Jo Warner, laid out very clearly the dilemma that she and her colleagues who are in this very struggling sector are faced with today.

Before COVID, her center had 70 slots for children completely full, with a waiting list. Today, they have 20 children in the same daycare center.

Is it because there is no demand? No, that is not the case. There still is a waiting list of families who are trying to get their kids into daycare.

Her problem is that the staffing that she had prior to COVID has severely diminished, and her ability to attract people back into her program is limited by the fact that she is only able to offer \$13 an hour as a starting wage for people in a very important job for our country as well as families of the children that they take care of.

So we are in a situation where they are in a place where McDonald's pays more, at \$15 an hour, than a daycare center, at \$13 an hour.

It is a problem which is, I think, one of the reasons why the jobs recovery has stalled, particularly for families and women heads-of-household who, again, don't have centers with slots available because of the staffing problem that Ms. Warner described to the President and to the world on Friday.

The Build Back Better legislation, he discussed it, finally, in a different kind of context, in terms of the horse race down here and who is up, who is down, which faction is negotiating what. He focused on the content of the Build Back Better legislation, which is addressed to provide a huge infusion of support for our daycare sector.

What that provision will do is cap the amount of out-of-pocket for families who are using child daycare at 7 percent of income. Today, low- and middle-income families spend between 14 and 35 percent of their income on daycare. If we get this through, we are immediately going to provide savings for families with their kids in daycare.

In Connecticut, looking at a family making \$87,000 a year, that basically would result in weekly savings of \$175 a week, which is definitely a huge boost in terms of working families and middle-class families, which this bill would provide.

Again, I want to emphasize, this is not a Connecticut problem. This is happening all across the country, and the median or the average salary for daycare centers across the country is actually \$12 an hour, a little lower than what the President heard about on Friday.

If we are serious about a real job recovery and giving families the opportunity to really go back to work, why don't we listen to the U.S. Chamber of

Commerce, the largest business organization in the country, which recognized during COVID that support for child daycare is essential, in terms of trying to get working-age families back into the workforce.

Again, the openings are there. I could walk through employers in the State of Connecticut. Electric Boat in my district has about 500 job openings right now. They want to get those Gen Z'ers and millennials trained up and ready to go. But if they don't have a place for their children to be cared for safely and adequately, then we are just basically in a cul-de-sac where this economy is going to be held back.

The Build Back Better agenda is not soft infrastructure. It is right at the heart of whether or not we are going to, as a country, fully recover and grow in the wake of this pandemic.

It is something that hopefully every Member, when the time comes for this package, when that daycare provision is included in there, will think about long and hard because this is not a Connecticut-only issue. This affects every State, red and blue; every district, red and blue; every employer, in red and blue areas of the country. If anyone can't support that, then they are not serious about really helping this country recover from the pandemic.

Again, I thank the President for coming out and really focusing like a laser on this issue. I thank Executive Director Barbara Jo Warner for her clear message to the country.

RECOGNIZING NATIONAL FOREST PRODUCTS WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize this week as National Forest Products Week.

In Pennsylvania, forest products have long been an essential industry by producing logs, lumber, furniture, paper, and more. These are products and materials that Americans nationwide use each and every day.

The forest products industry employs roughly 64,000 Pennsylvanians and generates \$36 billion in total economic impact statewide.

I am proud to represent Pennsylvania's only national forest, the Allegheny National Forest. This incredible forest, established in 1923, spans more than half a million acres in the northern portion of my district, across Forest, Elk, McKean, and Warren Counties.

Whether it is forestry, energy production, timber harvesting, or an abundance of outdoor activities, Allegheny National Forest has it all.

For generations, the ANF has brought economic prosperity to our region, and it is essential that we are able to contribute to the longevity and